

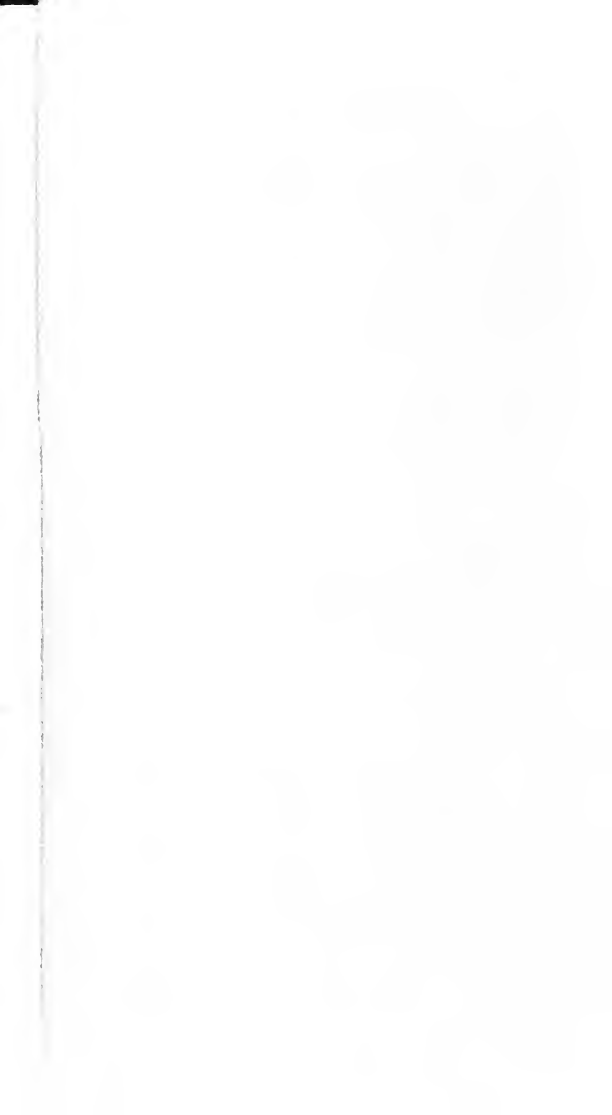
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ESSAY ON LIGHT READING.

ESSAY ON THE HISTORY OF THE

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AN
ESSAY
ON
LIGHT READING,
AS IT MAY BE SUPPOSED TO INFLUENCE
MORAL CONDUCT
AND
LITERARY TASTE.

BY
THE REV. EDWARD MANGIN, M. A.

..... Hæ nugæ seria ducent
In mala. HOR.
... In the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.
SHAKSP.

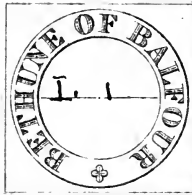
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AN

ESSAY, &c.

IN the following observations upon the subject of LIGHT READING, I shall not extend my view to works which might receive that title from such persons as Aristotle, Locke, or Newton; but, excluding from my definition of light literature, all folios, quartos, and crown-octavos of voyages, travels, tracts

of divinity, politics, metaphysics, &c., shall endeavour to call the attention of the reader to some remarks on a few of the various consequences which may be supposed to arise from the perusal of *novels, romances, and poems of a particular class*: in other words, to the ordinary contents of a circulating library.

Vanity already prompts me to believe that this my little volume has itself some chance of a place in one of those repositories, and therefore a chance of being read. Already, methinks, I see it take its post in a sky-blue or rose-coloured covering, upon the counter or in

the window ; and that this first and important difficulty being surmounted, every thing else, connected with its reputation, will follow of course.

It will receive condemnation or praise—it matters not which—from the reviewers ; be turned over, thrown down, taken up again, cut open, read, and returned to the shop with the usual and flattering marks of having seen service ; viz. a leaf or two torn out, scratches of pins, scorings of thumb-nails, and divers marginal illustrations, executed by means of a crow-quill, or a black-lead pencil.

But if, contrary to these suggestions of a vain heart, it should be the lot of my book to take rank amongst the *chartæ ineptæ* ; to lie in cold obstruction on the highest shelf, and constitute a sort of *fee-simple* to the first spider that gets possession of it, I must console myself with the reflection of having tried to merit a happier fate.

Before I examine the effects of which the light reading alluded to may be thought productive, I shall arrange the different orders of works of fancy under their proper heads.

Thus, to borrow a phrase from the

system of the naturalist, the word *novel* is a generical term ; of which romances, histories, memoirs, letters, tales, lives, and adventures, are the species. And these again have their appropriate characters ; and are either merry, mournful, or of a mixed kind.

Of these, all, except the romance, profess to be resemblances of truth : that is to say, representations of manners and persons actually living, or who have lived on this our planet. / And their object, when they happen to have one, is, or should be, to teach us, by virtuous and vicious examples, what

we ought to follow, and what to avoid.

With regard to such productions as are termed romances, it can hardly be expected that I should do more than their authors, and discover a design of instructing the reader where no such design is to be found: of these truly enormous performances, therefore, I shall say little or nothing; but proceed to consider the nature of the *novel*, properly so called: wishing it, however, to be understood that there are some volumes passing under that name which are in most points unexceptionable;

and of which I shall take notice before I conclude.

The writer and the reader of an ordinary novel seem to have entered into a mutual agreement as to the quality of the ingredients used in its composition: the chief of which is, a display of the passion of love, not only in all its varieties and all its virulence, but set forth with a strength of colouring rather *more* than natural.

Both parties appear to have adopted for their motto, and in a literal sense—*omnia vincit Amor*: and not confining the triumphs of this potent deity to the

human heart, which is, by courtesy, supposed his lawful field of battle, have extended his power to the human head also; and decency, reason, and grammatical accuracy, fall unlamented before him. The author of the novel feels no compunction, nor his reader any disgust; the former acquires money, and the latter finds amusement: and so far there is not any great mischief done. Nor, indeed, if matters rested there; should I think it necessary to enlarge further upon this topic: for had novels produced nothing in civilised life except a dinner to the writer, and a *harmless*

expedient for killing time to the reader, though I might have joined with the one in laughing at the other, I should have done no more. But, conscious as I am that books of the kind have a vast influence on the morals and manners of society, and an influence the most pernicious, I consider it my duty as a good citizen openly to assert the fact, and to use my best endeavours to prove it.

This part of my design cannot, perhaps, be more effectually executed than by giving a general description of those persons by whom novels are usually read, followed by a conjecture of some

of the consequences likely to arise from such studies, and by a particular examination of two or three of the most established works of this sort; which I shall strive to select with reference to their specific characters and complexions, and analyse as the grand and classic *originals*, whereon many thousands of an inferior degree have been modelled:

Novels can be looked on only as means of *occasional* relaxation to the very *high* and the very *low*: to the peeress, and her housemaid; the senator and his groom. On these, their effect, if

they produce any, can be but transient. And, falling under the eye of the enlightened man of letters, or of the discreet and decorous mother of a family, they are perused with apathy, or thrown aside with contempt. If the libraries expressly supported by the circulation of novels could number only such amongst their subscribers, their proprietors would suffer a *greater loss* than the nation.

But the profits of these persons flow from a more prolific source; and while they can reckon with confidence on having the YOUTH of both sexes, and of

the middle ranks of the state, *in their books*, there is an equal certainty of gain to them, and of moral injury to their readers.

The sons and daughters of the gentleman and the tradesman, who are, as it were, the very life-blood of the realm, become the principal victims of this idle literature; which is so universally diffused, so easy of access, and of so insidious a nature, as nearly to preclude the possibility of safety.

There is scarcely a street of the metropolis, or a village in the country, in which a circulating library may not be

found: nor is there a corner of the empire, where the English language is understood, that has not suffered from the effects of this institution.

When the female attains the age of seventeen or eighteen, and who is not born to the possession of an ample fortune, but destined to move in a moderate sphere; when her looking-glass and her partner at the assembly have told her that she is a beauty; and when the fairy-tales have lost their zest, the novel is at hand. The fair student sees her own picture in the charming and sorrowful heroine; and very naturally

tries, as far as it is in her power, to imitate what she admires.

For a time, the result of this attempt is only ridiculous, and manifested by gentle symptoms: such as a prodigious expenditure of tears and muslin, writing *billets* on green and yellow paper, fits of spleen, the composition of sonnets, and an invincible antipathy to useful books. Shortly after, the disease puts on a more formidable appearance: the young lady (whom we may suppose the daughter of a plain country parson, a substantial farmer, an eminent shop-keeper, or an officer on half-pay) ventures to wear

a little *rouge*, and to concentrate the rays of her affections upon some youthful 'squire, ensign, or merchant's apprentice ; whose attractions are comprised in a pair of white hands, a portion of skill in dancing, and the Christian-name of Charles, or Henry.

Now it is that the poison begins to work ; and several destinies await the lady ; some of which she must choose ; and the least formidable of them is not to be envied !

Let us imagine that, contrary to probability, she escapes infamy, desertion, and despair ; and, like another

Lydia Languish, lives *to be called spinster in church*, and to become honourably a mother : and then see what has been her preparation for this momentous calling, and what is likely to be the consequence.

For two or three years previous to marriage, she has moved amidst imaginary circles of heroes, nobility, and even of angels ; in an ideal Elysium ; where she has breathed none but vernal airs, and dwelt only in groves of immortal foliage ; where all her nights glistened with moon-light, and all her days were sunny ; where she has conversed

with personages who, instead of resembling the inhabitants of this world, resemble nothing, except the silly fancies of the foolish or vicious authors of the novels she has been reading ; and who sometimes know as little of the realities of life as she does ; or knowing, designedly conceal or misrepresent them.

It is, therefore, not wonderful that she should believe *intrigue* to be natural, *falsehood* and *filial disobedience* venial, and the passion of *love* absolutely invincible ; that a *consumption* is interesting ; and a *fever*, not a misfortune, but a blessing, as the bestower of en-

chanting weakness, and prepossessing languor ; and that youth, and its concomitants of blooming cheeks, auburn ringlets, pearly teeth, and odoriferous breath, are perpetuities, not only to her but to her favoured lover ; who is, like herself, an assemblage of perfections. He, we must suppose, in his turn, has received similar impressions by similar means ; and having arrived at the experienced and sagacious age of one or two and twenty (when by the laws he is styled a man, though in truth at that period nine out of ten are sucklings as to knowledge of the world),

makes formal proposals; and these two wiseacres are united by the indissoluble tie of marriage, without affluence, without erudition, without a capability of looking into the future, without knowing the characters and tempers of each other, without one correct notion of the important step they are taking, or of any other important step: in short, without a single *rational* inducement, and inspired solely by inclinations congenial to the young of opposite sexes; and these inclinations exasperated into frenzy by the perusal of novels.

Without this latter circumstance, such a marriage (as society is constituted in these nations) is the parent of much public and private calamity. But the evil is greatly magnified indeed, when the circulating library has been the preparatory school. And I believe it would not be difficult to show that its unthinking and immature frequenters are they who commonly form improper attachments, and enter into the matrimonial compact, the most serious of any, before they know the meaning of a legal or conscientious obligation.

For a week, or possibly a month after commencing the state of wedlock, the parties may continue in their mutual deception ; but this being dissipated by intimacy, as it will most assuredly be, the faculty of discernment is restored to or acquired by both these victims of delusion. Each is surprised on discovering the other to be merely a *mortal* ; reciprocal accusations of dissimulation and perfidy ensue, and are followed by dislike, and dislike by detestation : their asperities of temper are not softened by the imperious necessity of providing for the wants of children, whom they can

scarcely feed, and (for obvious reasons) cannot educate. And thus we have two divinities transformed into two fiends, who propagate a race of sons and daughters—doomed, like themselves, to suffer future misery, and to inflict it; to encumber, not to serve, their native land; and, imbibing the parental taste, to become, not the encouragers of useful arts and elegant studies, but of a tribe of illiterate and rapacious miscreants, who earn a livelihood by infusing immorality and absurdity into the general mind, and accumulate not only wealth, but celebrity, by writing novels!

To some, it may appear unreasonable to declaim with violence on such a subject, and to attribute evils so vast to so trivial a cause. There are *others*, however, who will think differently of this attempt; who will readily admit that I am authorised by abundant provocation, and that it is hardly possible to say too much in abuse of the particular species of writings now under consideration.

This is my own unprejudiced opinion, or I should relinquish my task; but I conceive myself pleading the cause of my country; and, though I devoutly wish it had fallen to the share of an

abler advocate, shall proceed to fulfil my original intention; and briefly review some of the most admired and *notorious* productions of the fictitious kind, both of an old and recent date: and perhaps not altogether unsuccessfully. When the objectionable features are collected into a group, their impurities and absurdities will be more striking than they can be while they lie scattered and designedly distributed amongst the numerous pages of the works in which they are contained.

From the nature of this undertaking, I find myself compelled (and I regret

the necessity) to retrace certain parts, and refer to certain passages, in the authors whose labours are about to be discussed. But my motive will not, I trust, be mistaken. My strictures shall be such, that although they may stamp the characters of infamy and contempt on their object, and inspire the wise and good with a just abhorrence of folly and depravity, shall not offend the eye of purity, nor create any sentiment, except that of indignation or derision, in bosoms not already corrupt.

Upon contemplating the mass of wickedness and fooleries pointed at, the

emotion of astonishment will, I apprehend, be strongly excited in the minds of my readers. They will naturally wonder how it happens that VICE has been allowed thus to stray at large, and to spread wide its deadly infection, "*unwhipp'd of Justice*;" and also, how a polite and serious people have been hitherto content to endure—not to say admire—the grossest violations of the code of urbanity; or how this people, distinguished by the appellation of *sensible*, amongst the nations of Europe, should permit themselves to be amused, and diverted from salutary and reputa-

ble pursuits, by puerilities more glaring than any in the legends of superstition, and often conveyed in language the most uncouth and barbarous.

The tender parent and conscientious guardian will feel surprise, not unmixed with self-reproach, at the reflection of having, through criminal inattention, connived at the perusal of some of those works which I shall specify: or who, through indolence not less criminal, have neglected to inquire how *all* the hours of their offspring or their pupils were passed; and, by an indifference wholly unpardonable, have allowed

the work of moral and useful instruction, to which the day may have been dedicated, to be demolished, like the web of Penelope, by the mischievous occupation of the night!

One of the best dramatic poets, and brightest wits of England, in his comedy of "The Rivals," has very happily ridiculed the bad effects of *novel reading*: many other distinguished satirists have done the same; and the perusal of certain novels has, accordingly, been deemed ridiculous, or, it may be, worse than ridiculous; but is, nevertheless, not abandoned. The cause of this is, that

the sly laugh of the comic poet, and the cursory sneer of the reviewer, are insufficient to effect their purpose.

Public decency demands a more grave and pointed exposure of what may be termed the propensity of the times; by which we of the present age, exclusive of the immediate harm we do, and suffer, are liable to be stigmatised by future generations as the abettors of obscenity, scurrility, and folly, as bad as any thing for which we ourselves condemn the licentious days of the second Charles.

I say, with some confidence, that

such is likely to be the sentence passed upon our tastes by posterity ; because I hope that our existence, as a nation, is not at an end ; and am sure that our continuance will depend upon our growing wiser and better.

The time, I trust, is to come, when the virtuous, the religious, the witty, and the learned, will wonder equally at the profligacy and the weakness of us their forefathers ; and will consign our *novels* to dust and darkness, as we have done by the monstrous effusions of Behn, and Etheridge, and Suckling ; and when “ Tom Jones,” and “ Roderick Ran-

dom," and Mr. Cumberland's "Henry," and "The Sorrows of Werter," and "Anna St. Ives," and the myriads which resemble these, will either not be found at all, or only in the cabinets of the curious and the reprobate.

Having reason to think that some of the well-known works to which the above titles are prefixed will answer our purpose as fully as any others; and as it is more or less the prevailing fashion to read, and quote, and praise the first-named in particular, viz. Mr. Fielding's "History of a Foundling," with it I shall begin.

There are few persons in these countries, I believe, of any age, sex, or condition, amongst those who can read, to whom the adventures of Tom Jones are not familiar. Something like a sense of shame would accompany the acknowledgment of never having read Tom Jones: though I do not despair of showing, that it would be more becoming in such mothers, wives, and daughters as *have*, to blush at the confession.

It is commonly the first book laid hold of by the youth of both sexes ; and if as yet not *all* intelligible to them, is still very entertaining, when compared

with the long-drawn narrative of the historian, or the abstruse lucubrations of the philosopher and the moralist.

What is read too with most delight, is always best remembered; thus there are, I suspect, in our seminaries of education, many young persons who know more of the site of Mr. *Allworthy's* house, and its environs, than they do of Athens or Rome; are better acquainted with *Mazzard Hill* than they are with the *Tarpeian Rock*; and though ignorant of the meaning of *lustres* and *laticlaves*, know correctly what a natural child signifies; and are intimate with every

corner in *Molly Seagrim's* bed-chamber, and with the cut of *Sophia Western's* riding-habit; while the Capitol and the Portico are forgotten; while in vain for them shines the shield of Achilles, and the bark of Cleopatra glides along unheeded!

Is it not lamentable that the divine pages of Cicero or Addison should be cast aside in favour of the vulgar trumpery of Fielding and his school? That the illustrious of the old and modern world, who at the cost of repose, and even of life, have toiled for real fame, and devoted their existence to the glo-

rious task of giving rational instruction to races yet unborn ; who have recorded the acts of the hero and the patriot ; who, in matchless strains, have sung the triumphs of civic virtue, and, by teaching empires to be *wise*, have contributed to make them *great* ; that these, the undoubted benefactors of mankind, should give place to those who, as undoubtedly, are its enemies ?

And surely that is not too severe an epithet to bestow on writers who, by composing novels like that of Tom Jones, not only instil improper thoughts, but intercept the progress of useful learning !

The excuse commonly offered for admiring Tom Jones is, that the work contains a just representation of human life; is intended to inspire sentiments of rectitude, honour, generosity, and valour; and displays much wit, humour, and erudition. If we admit this encomium in its fullest extent (which I am very far from doing), it will only prove that the novel is the more dangerous; because these real or fancied qualities are precisely what make it so.

The annals of the *Old Bailey* exhibit an equally just picture of life, as to its moral deformities; and one not at all

more forbidding than may be found in the pages of Fielding. Neither can I perceive the necessity or the expediency of inculcating the practice of *virtue* by an exaggerated and nauseous view of *vice* in all its odious distortions.

This author's powers of exciting merriment are by no means despicable : but the mirth he creates is often upon topics so much at variance with mental dignity and good-breeding, that no truly modest or polite female could either read, or hear another read, some of his pleasantries without offence. Besides, that

Tom Jones contains much wit, or that its wit is the basis of its popularity, is, I believe, not a fact. In the first chapter of the first book, the author has introduced a couplet from the writings of Pope, which bears rather hard on himself:

" True wit is Nature to advantage dress'd,
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd."

Now, although there may be much *nature* in the characters (as Fielding has drawn them) of ostlers, innkeepers, peasants, gipsies, waiting-maids, servant-men, London landladies, prostitutes, Irish fortune-hunters, Tory squires, ob-

sequious parsons, and village gossips ; I question if any one will aver these to be portraits of NATURE *advantageously* presented to the spectator ! And I am convinced, that no young gentleman, who has kept *good* company only, nor any well-conducted woman, ought to be capable of judging whether they are *natural* or otherwise.

But perhaps these are specimens, not of the wit, but of what is termed the *humour* of Tom Jones ; and if so, my last observation will apply with undiminished force : this *humour* is unpalatable to minds not contaminated.

In speaking of the Beggar's Opera, and its alleged influence on the lower orders of the people, Dr. Johnson remarks, that probably the objection is unfounded; for that no young idler of the audience will be tempted to go on the highway, and hope to escape with impunity, merely because Macheath is reprieved on the stage. Were the magistrates of London and Westminster consulted, they could, I imagine, contradict this supposition of Dr. Johnson. But allowing the conjecture of the critic to be just, with respect to the above-named opera, nothing similar can be

offered in extenuation of Tom Jones, or Roderick Random, or Peregrine Pickle. The dramatic robber is indeed reprieved (it would be difficult to say why), and, his poetical life once terminated, we hear no more of him: he is dismissed as he came forth, a bold and impenitent ruffian; and we are left at liberty to conclude that he returns to the road and the bagnio. But the heroes of Fielding and Smollet are, as has been observed of the tragedies of Otway, a seducing poison: they intrigue, and fight, and gamble; and revel in each variety of licentious-

ness; and their lawless career is accompanied by eclat, and rewarded with prosperity.

Where is the young man of lively sensibilities, and constitutional energy, who, uncontrolled, can resist the lure? His powers of reflection and self-restraint must be inconceivably great, if he can withstand the invitation to pleasure, which tells him that he may riot in security amidst illicit enjoyments, and ultimately reap a richer harvest than tame and timid prudence can hope for!

The first ambition of the inexperienced youth who reads these delete-

rious memoirs is, to emulate the principal personage; and, finding it much more easy to copy foibles and follies than laudable actions, he gives himself credit at least for a capability of being amiable; discovers that to fall into error is not difficult, and that its effects are not fatal; that though propriety may be outraged, the punishment is but temporary; that debts imprudently contracted may be discharged, an angry mistress be appeased, and the best gifts of fortune be heaped unexpectedly on him; and that finally he may retire, with health, youth, riches, and reputation, into the bosom of felicity.

It is needless to insist on what is likely to ensue, when the experiment is made, and this theory reduced to practice. The similitude to the hero or heroine is closely preserved, as far as it respects criminality and folly ; but fails most lamentably in the catastrophe, and finishes in ruin. This may pretty safely be considered as an abridgement of the novel of Tom Jones, and of the fates of many of its juvenile admirers.

The names of Fielding and Smollet have, I know, become venerable ; they have passed the ordeal of criticism, and their claim to eminence as *novel writers* no one ventures to dispute. It would

therefore be an act of more than ordinary hardihood to arraign them on the articles of style, or selection of incidents; the knowledge of the world evinced in delineating human character; or the refinements of art, which they have displayed in the conduct of their fable; and of ingenuity, on all occasions, in the application of epic dexterity.

Such an inquiry is, however, foreign to my present purpose; which is to prove, that, whatever may be their masterly qualifications in other points, they are not to be esteemed teachers of

politeness or of *virtue*, but of *coarseness* and *immorality*; that society has been corrupted, not meliorated, by their novels; and that *Tom Jones*, *Joseph Andrews*, *Peregrine Pickle*, *Roderick Random*, *Jonathan Wild*, *Count Fathom*, &c. &c., may be fit manuals for the rake and the courtesan, but are objects of abhorrence to the chaste and delicate mind, and can only cease to be such, when they have executed their felonious office, and transformed the innocent into the depraved.

In support of my assertion, it would be unnecessary to adduce particular

passages for the conviction of those who are already acquainted with any of the above-named works; and to do so for the information of such as are not, would be unsuitable to the character I wish to sustain. Indeed, the improper parts are so numerous, and of so gross a texture, as to render a detail of them incompatible with the established principles of decorum. It is to be hoped, therefore, that a rough outline of the story of any one of these notable performances, will suffice to create a sense of *shame* in some, and to repress the *curiosity* of others.

The history of Tom Jones is an exposition, and a very minute one, of the whole craft and mystery relating to the generation and breeding of illegitimate children : and the title of the work, and of every page of the work, keeps this idea strongly in the reader's recollection. The hero is concerned in several intrigues, which are given by the author at large, meet the eye at every turn, and are so essential to the business of the novel, that without them the whole would fall into confusion.

Jones's first adventures originate in a low amour ; much of his character is

developed by another, the colouring of which is heightened by insinuations of adultery, and even by allusions to the possibility of incest; and the winding-up of his history depends chiefly on a shameless intercourse with one of the most abandoned females of the metropolis.

If to this sketch we add the impure traits in the histories of Partridge, Mr. Square, and Mr. Nightingale; the oaths and execrations of 'Squire Western; and the filth which overflows in the innumerable dialogues that take place between personages selected from the dregs of

society, the sum will be an incredible and unpardonable accumulation of offences against the manners and morals of a civilised country.

Something like this censure, or perhaps something more severe, may be passed upon the *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle* of Smollet; whose humour is inferior to that of Fielding, and his objectionable scenes wrought up with still less regard to decency. In fact, the female who has read these novels has nothing bad to learn.

Nearly all the splendid qualities of *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle*

are subservient to licentious purposes. Their characters, and those of the minor agents in each piece, may be, and I dare say sometimes are, drawn with a strict attention to nature: but I trust I shall never know whether many of them are so or not.

The author is not satisfied with expatiating on the revelry of the stews, and the vile debaucheries of the bully and the harlot; but thinks it incumbent on him to subjoin nastiness to obscenity; and brings into full view the infirmities by which man is degraded; the ravages of loathsome distemper, and the stench and the vermin of the hospital.

To those who assert all this to be *natural*, I have only to say, that it is, for that very reason, inexcusable; and I must beg leave to remind them of a certain sarcasm attributed to Voltaire, as applied to the dramas of Shakspeare, and in allusion to the human person: "*We are not,*" said the wit, "*because nakedness is NATURAL, therefore to go naked!*"

To the list of writers whose novels are calculated to hurt the morals of the reader, it is with much concern I feel myself obliged to annex the celebrated and respected name of Mr. Cumberland. As the author of several most ingenious,

learned, and highly-finished works, he has merited the gratitude, and long enjoyed the admiration; of his country; and it is to be regretted that by his novel of "Henry," the TERENCE OF ENGLAND should have tarnished his honourable character; and after having so successfully endeavoured to *mend the heart*, employed his great talents to corrupt it!

Henry is not Mr. Cumberland's first offence. His "*Arundel*" is likewise exceptionable; but less so than the other; with which it bears no comparison, either in its pleasing or its pernicious

cious qualities. Henry is a fascinating publication; it abounds in passages of genuine humour; in the richest and most correct descriptions; and in incidents irresistibly pathetic, or replete with comic force: for the author is a master, and touches every chord of human sensibility with a master's hand. But the goodly work is, alas! marred, and its efficacy counteracted, by its being interlarded with scenes perfectly inexcusable; and very unseemly, as the labour of a head white with the snows of time, and crowned, as it is, with literary laurels. The author of Henry

might have lost somewhat of his popularity, but would not have suffered in his reputation, had that work never been written.

In these observations I have referred to such books as are rendered formidable, in my estimation, by the real or supposed abilities of the writers. I know them to be dangerous in their tendencies, and I denounce them as such, without any fear of contradiction from the reasonable and the good, or any dread of the enmity or the ridicule of the irrational and the bad. And admitting the survey taken of these novels

not to be exaggerated by the mist of prejudice, but, on the contrary, softened and reduced out of respect to my reader, I believe myself justified in declaring that the parents, guardians, or preceptors, who authorise, or permit, or connive at, or do not strictly prohibit the perusal of any of them to the youth whose morals they superintend, have to answer for a crime more heinous than can well be named; for which no subsequent care or caution can make reparation, either to the individual or the state, and for which hardly any penitence can ever atone.

Perhaps a total restriction from all

such light reading as includes novels of any kind, would be adviseable : but if otherwise, and that an exception should be made in favour of some works of this description, it is by no means impossible to point out several capable of communicating delight, unattended by contamination ; though it might be difficult to specify one that is not more or less productive of a distaste for the study of books of useful instruction. Some of these I shall mention hereafter ; but my present course requires that I should enter a *protest*, as the friend both of purity and reason, against a work called

“*The Monk*,” the author of which has entitled his book a romance. As such, I suppose, it defies the critic’s ordinary laws; but it should not be suffered with impunity to do the same by the laws of morality, and even by those of the land. Accordingly one of the best satirists, the finest writers, and most truly learned persons of the age, the author of “*The Pursuits of Literature*,” has, in a note to that poem, bestowed some pains in the castigation of the “*Monk*,” to this note I refer those who are desirous of seeing as choice a specimen of just severity and manly reproof as can any

where be found ; and shall therefore, on this disagreeable subject, add little more than an expression of regret, that, with the eloquent reprehension adverted to, any thing like praise should have been mingled.

By such as are not ashamed to applaud the pages of the *Monk*, the talents of the author are extolled as boundless ; while, amongst those who detest the impurity that stains them, there are many ready to confess the magnitude of the writer's powers, but lament their misapplication.

I must say it is my wish to separate

myself from each party. In powers of imagination, and variety of language, the author of the "*Monk*" is, I think, excelled by very many of the fair sex, and by several of his own; and, far from considering his genius misapplied, I am firmly convinced that romance is its proper element.

Of the works hitherto glanced at, the effect produced to society is of a nature so exceedingly alarming, that it is impossible to smile when we reflect on the operation of such ingredients as are used in their composition.

But this is not entirely the case with

regard to a tribe of exotic volumes, extremely well known to the proprietors and frequenters of all circulating libraries; and which, for the benefit of this and ensuing generations, have been industriously imported, and *painfully done into the English tongue.*

In turning over some of these, and most of the multitudes manufactured at home, one cannot but wonder how any books, thus ridiculous, should find readers so sparingly gifted with understanding as to be misled by them; of tastes so perverted as to be amused by such ill-digested stuff, or possessing so feeble a

sense of humour, as to resist laughing at the amazing absurdities they contain.

Amongst our *importations*, I shall take a short view only of one: for instance, *The Sorrows*—or, as they have been newly termed, *The Letters of Werter*; than which a richer combination of dangerous precept, and pompous foolery, will not easily be discovered.

In the preface to the translation of *Werter*, we are informed that the story is not to be received barely as the product of imagination; but that M. Goëthe has given the world little else than the particulars of a fact occurring

within the circle of his own acquaintance. It appears that the prototype of Werter was the son of a celebrated theologist of Brunswick, and killed himself for love of a lady of Wetzlar.

The son of a divine should have been better instructed than to cherish the flame of love for another person's wife, and shoot himself, because he could not possess what did not belong to him. And M. Goëthe might have employed his time on a less hurtful subject; instead of selecting decidedly one of the most unfit to present to the attention of youth.

Speaking of his hero, in an address prefixed to the original edition, he says, to the reader; "You cannot withhold your admiration of his genius, your pity to his disposition, or your tears for his unhappy fate." The meaning of which is (if any it has), that an adulterous passion is not a just subject of censure, but of commiseration; and that suicide is not a crime, but a calamity! Upon this principle, all human enormities may be converted into cases of pitiable frailty; and by representing the delinquent as otherwise amiable, vice is not only palliated, but recommended.

This, let his apologists argue as they will, is a perfectly fair description of the moral of M. Goëthe's book. But whether it be or not, is unimportant, because this at least is the general opinion. The physician who should administer poison instead of medicine, may not think himself guilty of murder; but the patient, who encounters death where he expected a cure, is equally a sufferer.

I am, however, unwilling to believe that this redoubted book can have caused a *great many* instances of self-destruction, or the subversion of much conjugal happiness, notwithstanding the

supposed design of the author. It is not likely to make a very deep impression on the sensibilities of hackney-coachmen, foot-soldiers, ploughmen, or porters; and it is to be hoped, that most persons, removed only one degree higher in the scale of social beings, are incapable of reading without laughing at it. For myself, I have in vain endeavoured to preserve my gravity during the perusal; and I remember that a particular friend of mine, even when a boy, had his risible faculties violently excited by an image presented to him in a passage of the tenth letter, where Werter says to

his correspondent, "whilst I am eating some bread and milk, I will write to you." Whereby it was apparent to my irreverent young acquaintance, that this ingenious and unfortunate gentleman must have been also somewhat of a conjurer, and adequate to doing with *two* hands what would require at least *three* on the part of any body else!

The admirers of Werter boast chiefly of the *simplicity* which pervades the work; and, in proof of this, cite many passages in which solemn mention is made of *apples, milk, coffee, whey, bread, and butter*, and the whole of the 54th

letter; which is so delicately worded, as to leave it doubtful whether it is addressed by Werter to his friend or his tailor. I should rather incline to suppose the latter; but the public will judge for itself; and as the *billet* is not long, I transcribe it:

‘ September 6.

‘ I have left off, with the greatest
 ‘ reluctance, the *blue frock*, which I wore
 ‘ the first time I danced with Charlotte,
 ‘ though it was perfectly shabby; but I
 ‘ have procured one exactly like it, and
 ‘ with a *buff waistcoat* and *breeches*. I do
 ‘ not, however, like it so much as the

‘ original, yet I hope it will in time become equally dear to me.’

Of our hero’s philosophy and self-command, the conclusion of the fourth letter affords a luminous instance: ‘ My heart,’ he says, ‘ is like a sick child; and, like a sick child, I let it *have its way*: but this between ourselves; for I know the world would blame me for suffering my passions to get such an ascendancy over my reason.’

For his gallantry and condescension, see letter five.

‘ The last time I was at the fountain, I found a young woman upon the

‘ steps, with her pail beside her, waiting
 ‘ till somebody came, who might help
 ‘ to place it upon her head: “ Shall I
 ‘ assist you, *my dear?*” I said. “ Oh,
 ‘ no, sir,” she answered, colouring.
 ‘ “ Come, come, make no ceremony,”
 ‘ said I; and helped her to lift the pail:
 ‘ she thanked me, and went up the steps,
 ‘ smiling.’

In this scene, which is highly dramatic, its admirers assert that the *unities* are finely preserved, the incidents well imagined, the dialogue terse, and beautifully pastoral; and the interest sustained to the last.

M. Goëthe has conferred a multiplicity of accomplishments on Werter, at a very small expense: we are assured that he not only draws, but understands Greek; and his literary *taste* is put out of doubt by various allusions, in terms of rapture, to those incomprehensible and tiresome forgeries, usually called the Poems of Ossian.

Every page contains instances of Werter's powers of reasoning, and his dexterous use of logical deductions: but nothing in this way can exceed one in the sixty-first letter, dated the 30th of *October*; a day, it may be presumed,

auspicious to moral argument. ‘A hun-
 dred times have I been on the point of
 clasp-
 ing her in my arms’ (*his friend’s*
wife). ‘What torment to see such loveli-
 ness, such charms, passing and repassing
 continually before one, without daring
 to touch them! To touch is so na-
 tural: do not children endeavour to
 touch every thing they see;—and
 I——.’ Whence it appears that this
 frantic gentleman knew extremely well
 what he was about; and that, more-
 over, had Mrs. Charlotte been *ugly*, he
 would not have been so anxious to
 touch her.

In letter fifty-six, his ambition was confined within more moderate limits, and something less than touching would have contented him; for he says, with sweet sensibility, ‘Only to look at her dark eyes, is to me happiness: what affects me is, that Albert’ (*the woman’s husband*) ‘appears not so happy as he expected to be; as I should have been, if—I hate broken sentences—heavens! And am I not explicit enough?’

Most certainly he is: his object is as manifest as any object can possibly be; nor is it altogether so *very surprising* that the poor man, whose domestic

peace he is undermining, should not appear happy.

The catastrophe which terminates this pious transaction wears rather a serious aspect; and, conscious of this, M. Goëthe has done his utmost to relieve its *sombre* colouring, by a few lively tints; for, doubtless, this must have been his motive for introducing some strokes of a character so equivocal, as to render it uncertain whether, at last, the reader should be sad or merry.

Can it be otherwise believed that the author (unless as light-headed as his hero) would represent him, when upon

the dismal verge of a suicide's grave, deliberately writing in the following manner?

‘ I have just been looking *out at the*
‘ window; and through clouds which
‘ were driven rapidly along, I perceived
‘ a few stars. Celestial bodies!’ (i. e.
the stars) ‘ you will not fall: the Eternal
‘ supports both you and me! I also saw
‘ the *greater Bear*—favourite of constel-
‘ lations!—I wish, Charlotte, to be buried
‘ in the clothes I now wear.—My soul
‘ hovers over the grave: my pockets are
‘ not to be searched: the knot of pink-
‘ ribband: how little was I aware of

‘consequences: let me entreat you to
 ‘be at peace; they are loaded; the
 ‘clock strikes twelve: I go.’ And
 forthwith he does go; but to what
 place, M. Goëthe has not informed us:
 we can therefore only conjecture, that
 it was probably to a place appointed for
 the reception of an author who has com-
 posed a novel for the purpose of cor-
 rupting public morals and perverting
 human reason.

It will not be thought incumbent
 on me to have pointed out any other
 works of the above description, as books
 to be shunned and discountenanced by

every well-wisher to the cause of virtue and sense. Those I have endeavoured to stigmatise may be esteemed the parents of an exceedingly numerous and corrupt progeny ; indeed, much too numerous even to be named. All that can be done then, is, to issue a general caution against every thing in the form of a romance, novel, or dramatic piece, proceeding from the modern *French* or *German* school, as well as against the novels of Fielding, Smollet, and their imitators. The perusal of such (supposing it to have no other ill effects), is a wasteful expenditure of

time in those who have still to acquire education; to fix their principles; to earn a reputable subsistence; or qualify themselves for their relative duties.

But it is fatally true, that losing the invaluable hours of youth is only one of the evils which arise from reading these works: they never yet made husbands or wives, parents or children, better citizens; but have rendered many thousands bad, who, without them, had been useful and happy.

My next consideration is directed to an order of novels, distinguished from the foregoing by a character compara-

tively harmless, though far from being innocent; and which may be said to hold the same rank amongst *novels*, that *pickpockets* do amongst *thieves*. Their depredations, however, are not, on that account, to be slighted, nor thought much less injurious. They execute their destructive functions by a different and less offensive method; but the mischief they occasion is, notwithstanding, great and irreparable.

The human mind, to speak figuratively of it, cannot remain in a state of sterility; and the poisonous weeds of vice and folly will spring up, where the

seeds of profitable and elegant acquirements are not encouraged to grow.

Thus, as was before observed, the young of both sexes, by means of those frivolous volumes which load the shelves of our circulating libraries, are at least beguiled of their fairest opportunities of improvement in the studies that enlarge and adorn the understandings of a civilised people.

They rapidly learn to prefer the page of *fiction* to the narrative of the historian; and to turn their eyes from the sober beauties of truth and genuine philosophy, to the meretricious allure-

ments of falsehood and absurdity. They likewise imbibe, from these sources, the most perverse and erroneous notions of the art of writing: the simple dignity of a classical composition is lost on these enthusiasts; who mistake for grandeur of style, the bombastic jargon of their favourite authors; and, grown incapable of relishing the graces of a Robertson, a Hume, a Mackenzie, or a Roscoe, are enamoured of every kind of writing which least resembles theirs.

Amidst such a profusion of these home-made novels as the British press hourly teems with, it would be difficult,

if not impossible, to make choice of any one in particular, as more ridiculous than its fellows. They are all equally vapid, and, as far as I can judge, equally popular; and are constructed upon principles so nearly alike, that I have sometimes thought there must be a general receipt for *making novels*, in circulation amongst the *trade*; the tenor of which might be conceived to run much in the following manner; borrowing the idea from a famous recipe, I believe, in the *Memoirs of Scriblerus*.

First take a great deal of paper, pens, and ink, and an English pocket

dictionary. Next compose a vast assortment of names, reserving the most *romantic* for your hero and heroine ; then, affixing persons to these appellations, allow them to converse together on any given subject, by letter, or word of mouth, as long as your publisher thinks proper. Intersperse, judiciously, *marcheses, marchesas, pavillions, monks, nuns, caverns, towers, lakes, and dells*. Transfer your scenery, and the *dramatis personæ*, frequently from one extremity of Europe to another. See that your heroine is invariably of a *fragile* form, with blue eyes ; accustom her to exist

without either eating, drinking, or sleeping ; which will enable her to endure as much fatigue as would weary a camel, without any inconvenience ; and also account for her always flying, tripping, bounding, and gliding—heroines being never known to walk.

Make your hero as much like the Belvidere Apollo, Hercules, and Antinous combined, as you can ; and take care that he knows how to *swim*.

For the story, no particular pains are requisite ; as it arises *naturally* out of the incidents. Sprinkle the whole with sighs, dew-drops, pearls, smiles,

blushes, roses, sal-volatile, and *eau de luce*. Let your musical instruments be confined to lutes, flutes, and pedal harps; and recollect to commit all your murders with a stiletto.

With these rules, or something of the same kind as a ground-work, several modern authors have laboured successfully; and, if endowed with superior capacity, have contrived to render a novel, on the above plan, at the same time a vehicle for treason, blasphemy, and private calumny.

There is a novel called “Vension, or Love’s Mazes,” published in

1806, which, though bearing a striking resemblance to its brethren, has as fair pretensions to notice as any of them. It is in great request at all the watering-places; and an especial favourite with young ladies and gentlemen at Bath, where I procured the gratification of reading it (after many disappointments and much solicitation) from the proprietor of a circulating library; who assured me, at the time of lending it, that he gave me the preference over fifteen expectants.

How it came to be so much sought after, I was at some loss to conceive; as

it contains, to do it but justice, neither apparent slander nor impurity; until I observed, that it abounds in those fascinations of style, sentiment, and description, which are considered irresistible; and which indeed render it singularly well suited to my purpose, as an illustration of the *nonsensical* in writing.

It may be worth remarking, that the word NONSENSE is actually contained in the syllables which compose this most extraordinary title of Vensenshon; by the bye, the name of the heroine.

For some time, I could hardly persuade myself that the work now before

me was not a burlesque on modern novels ; and, as such, its excellence would be undeniable. But, alas ! no such plea can be offered in its defence : Vensenshon is not only written, but read, in downright seriousness ; and reflects (as my faithful extracts will show) less discredit on the *author*, than on the nineteenth century, on the purchasers of the work and its sapient admirers, and, most particularly, on the whole body of reviewers ; who, labouring often to repress the efforts of real talents, by which the public mind might be improved and civilization promoted, have quietly per-

mitted such writings as Vensenshon, and its likenesses, to pass uncensured, if not unnoticed, into the world: whilst the man of undoubted genius and learning, who has exhausted half his days in painful studies, famishes in a hovel or a prison; neglected, or unknown through want of encouragement; and perhaps is driven to despair by the base intrigues of hired critics and mercenary publishers.

This is a formidable charge; but one which, unfortunately, can be fully sustained and made good by proofs drawn from the literary history of our times.

Some have supposed that this can never be the fate of great abilities; and that mankind have too much regard to their own advantage, to overlook those who possess the powers of delighting and instructing their fellow-creatures. But these are the conjectures of the ignorant and uninitiated, who require to be informed that a bookseller can buy the ravings of some silly old woman, or illiterate apprentice, for two or three guineas; and, by puffs in the newspapers, and making interest with the reviewers, can impose his bargain on the public, and, by the sale of it, pro-

cure two or three hundred pounds for himself. Whereas the writer of merit is more difficult to find, and less moderate in his demands.

But to return to Vensenshon: I here present my reader with some of its beauties; and request, that, should a few of my extracts prove rather unintelligible, that circumstance may not be attributed to any dulness on his part, nor to any want of accuracy on mine.

The opening sentence is as follows:
 “The first glow of breezy morn. crimsoned the eastern horizon; the light-grey mists retired abashed, or fainted on

each spiry mountain, that towered its bosom to cerulean zeniths."

The next is nothing inferior in neatness and simplicity of expression:

"Her roseate blushes kindled the dew-bathed, aromatic vegetation into lustrous animation, and rolled a mass of vivid splendor over the illumined beauty of creation."

Then a mother is described as fearful, and her fears as feminine; she exhorts her son to emulate *the fame of his sainted sire*; the youth catches the enthusiasm, and the *author* proceeds to observe:

“ The lofty organization of his inward faculties, the just temper of his luxuriant, keenly-perceptive mind, revolted from every species of baseness, and spurned at each shadow of mediocrity. To soar, to tower, to be immortalized on the annals of glory, was his inspiring, magnanimous goal.”

This writer's *forte* seems to consist in the art of conveying ordinary thoughts in extraordinary language: the above are, it is believed, descriptions of *morn-*
ing and *ambition*; and are followed by others to which I shall prefix the best interpretations I can. For example:

The meeting of friends hereafter.

“When released from earthly probation, unshackled by mundane frailties, their chastened spirit blends with its kindred seraph.”

A general killed in the West Indies.

“A poisonous arrow fatally envenomed his patriot breast.”

A lieutenant in love, and on leave of absence.

“Hours, weeks, flew on the wings of gaiety and bliss; enchained in a delirium of happiness, he forgot to scrutinize the nature of those exquisite sensations.”

Promoted, and ordered to join.

“ Captain Beaufort was again summoned to join the daring band, in search of victory and renown.”

Gets money with his wife.

“ Five thousand pounds produced an interest sufficient for the economy of rural domestication.”

Soon after this event, the lady becomes a widow, and retires to the village of *Bellonmore* in Devon, which is described as a *luxuriated county*. She there establishes herself in a “ fairy mansion,” and “ her sorrows fade at the tranquillizing touch of nature ;” of

which tranquillizing touch this is a picture:

“All was in unison with her mind’s romantic temper. Sublime variety nodded from the appalling, crag-encumbered steep, and awakened the throb of horror. Then would soft, verdant blooms, in all the flowing luxuriance of variegated playfulness, sport on her fascinated eye, and lull each aching feeling into the slumber of dulcet indefinable emotion.”

A portrait of the heroine.

“Vensenshon was no longer an infantine child of frolic nature; but moved the

all-lovely fascinating girl of eighteen. Bright beams of genius illumined her dark-blue eyes, softened to feminine loveliness by the magic of exquisite sensibility. Her face was modelled by the finished lines of Grecian fascination; soft coral lips enshrined pearly teeth, white as Alpine snows which have never felt Aurora's glowing pressure. Her complexion boasted not a dazzling fairness, yet was brilliantly transparent; as the light canopy of azure, ere a passing cloud has shadowed the serene front of a bright autumnal morning. Her polished limbs possessed the easy grace

and symmetric delicacy of Medicean voluptè.

Evening.

“ Cynthia was unfolding her spangled mantle, and gaily spreading the opacuous drapery over nature’s soft-fainting features.”

Its effect on Vensenshon.

“ Her inward eye was rapt in blissful contemplation of supermundane truths, while the glow of youthful enthusiasm agitated her heart with rapturous eccentricity, and dissolved her soul in a reverie of undefinable tenderness.”

While in this calamitous condition, she is overtaken by

The moon.

“Night’s argent queen had then seized her softest sceptre, and stole, unheeded, on Vensenshon’s solitary ramble.”

Vensenshon, whose fingers are “rose-tipped,” walks home through a field; and this is termed “her light pressure on velvet verdure.” And

Love at first sight

is thus described:—“The first moment in which she beheld Adolphus, bid her prove Love’s all-potent throb: that soft

placidity was fled ; but ah ! how rapturous, how agonizing rapturous, the fine-wrought sensations that had supplanted the barren vacuum of her happy era !”

After much blushing, throbbing, and walking in their sleep, towards the close of the *third* volume, most of the parties grow into nobility, and are imparadised on each other’s faithful bosoms.

It may appear more than unnecessary thus “to prepare the rack for a butterfly,” and single out *such* a work as Vensenshon for exposure. But my design required that I should find a sufficient example of this species of novel ;

having already adduced instances of works so denominated, capable of injuring the manners and morals of the young as radically as Vensenshon is calculated to vitiate their tastes.

In an essay like this, it is presumed that the writer may be permitted to indulge his fancy with the supposition of some of the noxious effects arising from the prevailing fondness for light reading in general, but especially for novels: because, exclusive of its immediate operation on the taste and morals of youth, it can, I think, be shown, that a familiarity with *counterfeit* afflictions is to-

tally destructive of that sensibility to which they are erroneously believed so favourable ; and that the same study which perverts the reason, also contributes to indurate the heart.

Of this, I have myself witnessed too many instances to allow of my entertaining any doubt upon the subject. I have known a man who, as a duellist and a gamester, had steeped his hands in the blood of more than three fellow-creatures, and, by his success at the hazard-table, reduced several to beggary ; who by his arts had betrayed many females to ruin ; by filial disobedience had

deprived his parents of the repose and the reverence to which old age looks for its best earthly recompense; who by the ferocity of his disposition had alienated his relations, friends, and acquaintances, and acquired the hatred of his tenantry and domestics; who, although he had squandered hundreds from ostentation and caprice, never bestowed a guinea to relieve distress, nor heaved one sigh of compassion when imploring misery has stood within his view: and this man has often been seen melted into tears at the theatre, and still more frequently when engaged in the amusement of reading *tender novels*.

This prodigious inconsistency of character can only be accounted for by supposing that so much vice was the fruit of a bad education ; and that the same individual might have been made as singularly virtuous by a course of rational discipline, as he proved abandoned through neglect.

We can readily imagine that this person, in his youth, had imbibed his ideas of human life, both with respect to prosperity and adversity, from works of fiction ; in which they are usually so misrepresented, as to causes and effects, that they bear no resemblance whatever to reality : and he who, as a strip-

ling, could glow with sentiments of courage and benevolence, and weep over the woes of suffering worth, found, on stepping into the world, demands indeed enough upon his valour, his humanity, and his generosity, but found not the appeal made as his books taught him to expect it would be—No divine and spotless fair-one, beset by ravishers, or buried in the dungeons of a castle; no princesses disguised in peasants' garbs; no pale incognitas in picturesque cottages or woodbine bowers; no romantic adventures to be achieved on Alpine heights or in Tuscan valleys! Is it

then wonderful, that, with a mind unprepared by good education, and adulterated by one of an opposite kind, he should have continued insensible to the "round unvarnished tale" of real misery, and deaf to its cries? Or that, unacquainted with the pleasures which learning procures for its possessor, *his* chief gratification should have arisen from pursuits, in which the most illiterate, vulgar, and ferocious, are most likely to succeed?

To a female, whose earliest impressions have been received from novels, how surprisingly tame and insipid must

real life appear, contrasted with her conception of it!

Is it not reasonable to expect that her lot will rather be destruction than felicity; and that she has a much greater chance of becoming the wanton mistress of a profligate, than the seemly wife of a respectable husband?

With a young woman thus prejudiced, what likelihood of succeeding has an honourable suitor, whose qualities of person and understanding are, in her eyes, but a degree less than *perfect*? Should a man *not of the first order of fine forms*, with fewer accomplishments

than the hero of a novel, and whose Christian name should unfortunately be *Timothy*, or *Nicholas*, or *Daniel*, present himself to the sublimated nymph, he is scornfully dismissed in behalf of some well-dressed and flippant idiot, who, being an adept in the literature of the circulating library, can converse with the lady on equal terms, and is master of all the requisites that can constitute him the destroyer of domestic peace, but of none whereby female honour or happiness can be secured.

The advocates of light reading may assert, that young persons of any re-

spectability run it over merely as a pastime; and cannot be seriously affected by books taken up, and again laid aside, with indifference. (But this plea is founded in mistake:) the unnatural incidents, inflated style, and false principles of the ordinary novel, are *insufferable* to one at all conversant with the charms of intellectual refinement, or who has been once initiated in the knowledge that works of a rational description contain: and an attachment to the former is so incompatible with a relish for the latter, that a professed reader of *novels* seldom or never reads any thing else.

Having before admitted that there are some works of the fictitious kind which may, comparatively, be termed unexceptionable; I shall proceed to mention the characters of a few, to which the moralist cannot make any positive opposition; and in the pages of which, the lover of wit, humour, and a correct style, may find much to admire. Yet even these cannot be very safely entrusted to the young and inexperienced; for still they *are* novels; and however rigidly the author may conform to the laws of propriety, and exert himself to convey only precepts of utility; to ex-

hilarate, without being indelicate; and to warn his reader against vice, without too plainly telling what it is; his principal object is, nevertheless, to *entertain*, and communicate to fiction the semblance of truth.

Although, therefore, the mature, and those more advanced in life, may read such works with impunity, and derive amusement from them, the young, with whom education has hardly commenced, and cannot as yet be perfected, should be kept in ignorance of their contents, and their irrevocable hours be dedicated to more salutary purposes.

The novels of Richardson form a very striking contrast with those already noticed ; and may indeed be said to embrace an exceedingly fine system of ethics, conveyed in a style sufficiently clear, and in language unusually copious. To the histories of *Clarissa*, and *Sir Charles Grandison*, two objections have been made, which appear to me of little or no force. It has been said, that the chief personages in these works are of a rank too elevated to afford wholesome examples to the general reader ; and, that all the amiable characters of the author in question are loaded with

virtues and accomplishments which frail humanity can neither imitate nor acquire. But it is observable that, however exalted from their wealth and station the leading figures in each of the above pieces may be, there is interspersed a vast multitude of a subordinate cast; and that the choicest lessons are occasionally given to almost all degrees of men in a state of civilized society.

And with respect to the second objection, we are provided with a sufficient answer by the writer himself, who has presented us with an admirable analysis of his design; especially in drawing his

noble portraits of masculine and feminine excellence, in Sir Charles Grandison and Miss Byron; who are evidently intended as representations of what man and woman *ought* to be, not of what they are; and it is equally manifest, that they approach nearest to perfection who most resemble these highly finished models.

Against Richardson, the shafts of sarcasm have been discharged in profusion; he has been sneered at by wittings, and attacked by critics: but their assaults have proved ineffectual, and he still deservedly maintains the reputation

conferred on him by the discerning, the virtuous, and the learned of a former age. His pages are still read with delight by the man of taste, and the man of morals. No one ever yet laid down a volume of the writings of Richardson with any diminution of his piety, nor with any sentiment hostile to the interests of virtue; and if they have fallen in popularity, it is to be feared that something worse than the caprice of fashion, or the lapse of years, is connected with the circumstance.

It must, at the same time, be allowed that the manners of Richardson's persons

have become, in some measure, obsolete ; and that, in this respect, a change has taken place similar to what has occurred in the dress and behaviour of the British nation. In lieu of stiff stays, high-heeled shoes, flowered silks, embroidered coats, and flowing perukes, our *belles* and fine gentlemen have assumed a more picturesque and airy costume ; and, instead of the restraint imposed by ceremonials, have adopted a system of a totally opposite kind. But, as to alter is not always to mend, I believe it may be asserted that the change has not been to our advantage.

Neither, perhaps, is it very creditable to us, that we should ridicule as formal what our fathers thought dignified, and laugh at what caused them to weep.

If, notwithstanding, Richardson must be given up as antiquated, and that an author is to be found not liable to the same objection; I think one may be named, who, in the compass of a novel contained in two small volumes, has proved himself not only the friend and teacher of virtue, but a perfect master of all the powers requisite to accomplish his object: unequalled in humour, and irresistibly pathetic; writing in a nearly

faultless style, and with such closeness of observation, that the characters in his work will be intelligible, and appear natural, as long as the English language is understood: and all this, without the slightest offence either to religion, virtue, or decorum. I allude to Oliver Goldsmith, and his novel, "*The Vicar of Wakefield.*"

That it should be universally admired, ought not to excite astonishment in any who are acquainted with this incomparable work; though they might be pardoned for wondering (as I must own I do) how a nation, capable of re-

lishing some of the novels mentioned in the preceding part of these observations, can likewise possess a true taste for the merits of such a performance as this of Goldsmith.

From the advertisement prefixed to the work by its author, we have a view of the plan he has so ably executed. But every admirer of his will rejoice to perceive that he was mistaken in supposing his book would obtain but little celebrity; a conjecture in which, if he was sincere, he does injustice to his own talents, and to the discernment of mankind.

There are few to whom the Vicar of Wakefield is unknown; and I imagine that, amongst English readers, there does not exist an individual dull enough to refuse the tribute of unqualified praise to this novel.

“The hero of this piece,” says the author, “unites in himself the three greatest characters upon earth: he is a priest, a husbandman, and a father of a family; he is drawn as ready to teach, and ready to obey; as simple in affluence, and majestic in adversity. In this age of opulence and refinement, whom can such a character hope to please?”

Such as are fond of high life, will turn with disdain from the simplicity of his country fire-side; such as mistake ribaldry for humour, will find no wit in his harmless conversation; and such as have been taught to deride religion, will laugh at one whose chief stores of comfort are drawn from futurity."

The above passages are full of matter and meaning: with infinite modesty, and in the happiest expressions, the writer has delineated his work; and while he describes what novels should be, points the keenest satire at those which are composed upon other princi-

ples, and stamps a mark of opprobrium both on the authors of such and their admirers.

Goldsmith's declaration in his advertisement inclines me to say, that if there is a novel which should not be prohibited, and which should even be recommended to all, as pure, pleasing, and instructive, it is the *Vicar of Wakefield*. Every thing, indeed, which Goldsmith has written, deserves the same commendation as this charming tale. According to the first couplet in Pope's fine prologue to *Cato*, the aim of Goldsmith has constantly been,

“ To wake the soul, by tender strokes of art ;
To raise the genius, and to mend the heart.”

An encomium in which it is to be lamented so very few can share with him.

It would not be easy to find, within the compass of light literature, any thing more perfect in its kind than the scene unfolded in the opening chapters of the Vicar of Wakefield: it abounds in strokes of humour and tenderness; and fixes the attention by a most affecting picture of a happy *home*, enjoyed by persons in the middle rank of life, citizens of a free country, and possessing competent means and innocent minds.

The group of characters, their circumstances, and local situation, are truly *English*, and could only belong to the enviable land within whose confines the scene is laid.

In England alone, amongst the nations of the earth, could such an individual as the vicar be supposed. Idolatry, Mahometanism, and superstition have indeed their priests; and the minister of religion exists alike under the fervour of Indian skies, and in the twilight of Lapland; in the cloisters of Madrid, and the conventicles of Philadelphia: but England only can exhibit the

original from which the inimitable portrait of Dr. Primrose is taken.

He is drawn as pious, learned, charitable, hospitable; fearless in the cause of sanctity and rectitude; in affliction, at once magnanimous and resigned; in prosperity, grateful and humble; a kind and sympathizing neighbour; a most affectionate parent; and, as a pastor, almost worshipped for his virtues by the flock under his care.

As a shade, to counteract the dazzling effect of so much excellence, his learning is represented as not quite unmixed with inoffensive pedantry; and

the awe inspired by his good natural understanding, is admirably tempered with a very endearing cast of simplicity ; and the solemnity of his deportment relieved, by a well - managed introduction of comic traits.

If any thing can equal this portrait of the vicar, it is the delicacy with which his story is related ; and the art shown by the author in conducting the personages of his fable through various vicissitudes, without the least appearance of exaggeration or force. The reader sheds tears at their sorrows, and exults in their restoration to felicity : but the

depression of spirits created by the perusal has in it nothing shocking, nothing disgusting; it is rather the "*luxury of grief*:" and the most unsullied chastity may, without self-reproach, smile at all the pleasantries of Goldsmith.

This dexterity in the author of a novel cannot be too highly praised; particularly if we consider the period when Goldsmith wrote, the opportunities his own hard lot in life had afforded him of becoming acquainted with every phrase of vulgar humour, and how strongly (had he pleased to do so) he

might have pourtrayed many of the incidents in his narrative.

His powers of description and command of language were nearly unlimited, and many of the events in the *Vicar of Wakefield* are such as would have tempted a writer of meaner talents and less true sensibility, to exceed those boundaries which he scorned to overleap; confident that the object in view might be otherwise attained, and that success would be purchased at too great a price by an outrage against the morals of his country.

Of a work so well known and so well

well executed, it is needless to quote what are usually esteemed the brilliant passages ; and, in fact, to do this would be little else than to transcribe the entire. But, in general, it may be affirmed of it, that it includes examples of every variety of excellence required in a performance of the kind.

Though I have already extended this article farther than may be thought necessary, I must, before I quit the subject, request greater indulgence from my reader ; and entreat his attention to a few remarks, which will probably tend still more than what has been said to elevate the character of Goldsmith.

To this I am induced from having observed that, on several occasions, and by different writers of the day, many a name, not only less eminent in the republic of letters, but actually contemptible, has been recorded with honour, while that of Goldsmith is overlooked: and also, because I have an opportunity of correcting some mistakes which exist respecting the birth-place of this ingenious man, and of clearing up a contested question, as to the precise scene of his "*Deserted Village*."

For my information on these points, I am indebted to the politeness of the reverend Doctor STREAN, a clergyman

in the diocese of Elphin ; well known to many for his moral worth and extensive learning. From him, in reply to my inquiries, I received a letter, of which, in its proper place, I shall give a copy ; conscious that it would be unjust to withhold it from the curiosity of my readers, and impossible, by any alteration, to improve it.

It is much to be regretted that we have not a life of Dr. Goldsmith, and a review of his voluminous works, from the nervous and critical pen of his illustrious friend Dr. Johnson ; or, at least, something more satisfactory than the

scanty memoir usually prefixed to his poems. With this, nevertheless, and the anecdotes of him scattered throughout Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, and a page or two dedicated to his memory by Mr. Cumberland, in his account of himself, it is probable the world must now be content.

From all these, however, it may be collected that Goldsmith, endowed as he assuredly was with transcendant abilities, struggling with the pains of indigence and obscurity; a lover of ease, and possessed of appetites which impelled him strongly to the pursuit of

pleasure; yet, to his immortal honour, stood firm in the cause of VIRTUE; and, disdaining to rescue himself from poverty by the prostitution of his great and versatile talents, to the base services of impurity, personal abuse, or party rancour, merited the panegyric conferred on the excellent Thomson, of never having published

“ One line which, dying, he could wish to blot.”

That he was sorely pressed by poverty, may be gathered very distinctly from the lively description which Mr. Cumberland has given of the bard's embarrassments at different periods; but par-

ticularly at the time of his composing the Vicar of Wakefield. Dr. Johnson, it appears, related with great humour his efforts to save poor Goldsmith from a most ridiculous dilemma, by procuring him the purchase-money for this novel, which he sold to Dodsley, as Mr. Cumberland thinks, for the sum of ten pounds only.

Goldsmith had run up a debt of some few pounds with his landlady for board and lodging, and was at his wit's end how to wipe off the score, and keep himself under the shelter of a roof, without embracing a very staggering pro-

posal on the lady's part: no less than that of taking his creditor to wife; and her importunity was great, though her charms were far from alluring. In this terrific crisis of his fate, Johnson found him in the act of meditating on the melancholy alternative before him; and casting his eye over the MS., saw something that gave him hope, and carried it off to Dodsley; administering the money obtained by a guinea at a time to Goldsmith; and so paid the debt, and disentangled the luckless author from the snares of the fair-one!

To a favourable character of Gold-

smith's style, and an encomium on the gentleness of his manners and the goodness of his heart, Mr. Cumberland very handsomely adds: "if he had been rich, the world would have been poorer than it is, by the loss of all the treasures of his genius and the contributions of his pen."

Doctor STREAN'S interesting answer to my application is as follows:

' My dear Sir,

' Could I have sooner ascertained
' the place of Goldsmith's birth, &c.,
' you should have heard from me before this. And I must begin by ob-

‘ serving that the following distich,
 ‘ which I have seen somewhere,

“ *Septem urbes certant de stirpe insignis Homeri,
 Smyrna, Rhodos, Colophon, Salamis, Chios, Argos,
 Athenæ,*”

‘ is applicable to the disputed birth-
 ‘ place of our poet; with this difference,
 ‘ that *two* places only, namely, *Pallas* in
 ‘ the county of Longford, and *Ardnagan*
 ‘ (in correct Celtic orthography, *Aird-*
 ‘ *nagabha*; in English, *Smith-Hill*) in the
 ‘ county of Roscommon, contend for
 ‘ that honour; and notwithstanding I
 ‘ have travelled many miles to inquire
 ‘ of the bard’s relations, as well as of

• some of the oldest inhabitants of three
 • counties, who knew him and his fa-
 • mily, *adhuc sub iudice lis est*. How-
 • ever, the most authentic account is in
 • favour of the latter, where his ances-
 • tors had lived; and from the neigh-
 • bourhood of which his father, the reve-
 • rend Charles Goldsmith, removed to
 • Pallas, while Oliver was a boy, and
 • where he lived in his father's house till
 • the age of about eighteen or nineteen;
 • when his father and family removed to
 • *Lissey*, in the parish of Kilkenny-west,
 • in the county of Westmeath; and there
 • built the house afterwards celebrated

' by the poet under the name of *Au-*
 ' burn; situated in the centre of the
 ' plain, which is unquestionably the
 ' scene of his *Deserted Village*, as the
 ' history of those inhabitants who were
 ' of his day, and the situation of the
 ' country then and now, clearly prove.

' Here he lived with his father until
 ' his death; and, when the old clergy-
 ' man was succeeded by his son Henry
 ' in the cure and mansion, he continued
 ' to live with his brother, to whom he
 ' addresses his "Traveller," and who is
 ' the curate "*passing rich with forty*
 ' *pounds a year;*" which was not only

his salary, but continued to be the same when I, a successor, was appointed to that parish.

The poem of the "Deserted Village," took its origin from the circumstance of general Robert Napper (the grandfather of the gentleman who now lives in the house, within half a mile of Lissoy, and built by the general) having purchased an extensive tract of the country surrounding Lissoy, or *Auburn*; in consequence of which many families, here called *cottiers*, were removed, to make room for the intended improvements of what was

' now to become the wide domain of a
 ' rich man, warm with the idea of
 ' changing the face of his new acqui-
 ' sition; and were forced, "*with fainting*
 ' *steps,*" to go in search of "*torrid*
 ' *tracts*" and "*distant climes.*"

' This fact alone might be sufficient to
 ' establish the seat of the poem; but there
 ' cannot remain a doubt in any unpreju-
 ' diced mind when the following are
 ' added; viz. that the character of the
 ' village-preacher, the above-named
 ' Henry, is copied from nature. He is
 ' described exactly as he lived; and his
 ' "*modest mansion*" as it existed.

‘ Burn, the name of the village-master,
 ‘ and the site of his school-house; and
 ‘ *Catherine Giraghty*, a lonely widow,
 “ The wretched matron, forc’d in age for bread
 To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread;”
 ‘ (and to this day the brook and ditches
 ‘ near the spot where her cabin stood
 ‘ abound with cresses) still remain in
 ‘ the memory of the inhabitants, and
 ‘ *Catherine’s* children live in the neigh-
 ‘ bourhood. The pool, the busy mill,
 ‘ the house where “ *nut-brown draughts*
 ‘ *inspired,*” are still visited as the poetic
 ‘ scene; and the “ *hawthorn-bush,*”
 ‘ growing in an open space in front of

' the house, which I knew to have three
 ' trunks, is now reduced to one; the
 ' other two having been cut, from time
 ' to time, by persons carrying pieces of
 ' it away to be made into toys, &c. in
 ' honour of the bard, and of the cele-
 ' brity of his poem. All these contri-
 ' bute to the same proof; and the "*de-*
 ' *cent church*," which I attended for up-
 ' wards of eighteen years, and which
 ' "*tops the neighbouring hill*," is exactly
 ' described as seen from Lissoy, the re-
 ' sidence of the preacher.

' I should have observed that Eliza-
 ' beth Delap, who was a parishioner of

‘ mine, and died at the age of about
 ‘ ninety, often told me she was the first
 ‘ who put a book into Goldsmith’s hand ;
 ‘ by which she meant that she taught
 ‘ him his letters : she was allied to him,
 ‘ and kept a little school.

‘ His education, however, was at
 ‘ the diocesan school of Elphin, as ap-
 ‘ pears by a letter I received by post,
 ‘ while writing the above, from a very re-
 ‘ spectable gentleman. I send you an
 ‘ extract, by which you will see my ori-
 ‘ ginal conjecture of the poet’s birth-place
 ‘ fully confirmed, and the author of his
 ‘ epitaph in Westminster-abbey confuted.

“ Smith-Hill, Dec. 24, 1807.

“ Dear Sir,

“ The reverend Oliver Jones was
curate of Elphin, and also had the
diocesan school of that town: he lived
where I now live, a little more than
half a mile from the church. He had
four daughters, and no son. My
grandfather, George Hicks, was mar-
ried to one of these daughters, and
consequently knew every circumstance
relating to that family; and has often
told me that the reverend Mr. Gold-
smith, who was married to another of
Mr. Jones's daughters, had a curacy

‘ somewhere near Athlone, and that
 ‘ Mrs. Goldsmith spent much of her
 ‘ time with her mother, Mrs. Jones,
 ‘ then a widow, and living at Smith-
 ‘ Hill; that Oliver Goldsmith was born
 ‘ here, in his grandfather’s house; that
 ‘ he was nursed and reared here, and
 ‘ got the early part of his education at
 ‘ the school of Elphin.

‘ “ My mother, the only child of the
 ‘ above George Hicks and Miss Jones,
 ‘ was contemporary with Oliver Gold-
 ‘ smith, and brought up in her grand-
 ‘ father’s house. She also has often told
 ‘ me the foregoing circumstances; and

‘ has shown me the very spot where the
 ‘ bed stood in which Goldsmith was
 ‘ born. From what I have always heard
 ‘ and understood, I never had a doubt
 ‘ on my mind that Goldsmith was born
 ‘ here.

‘ “I am, &c. &c.

‘ “ROBERT JONES LLOYD.”

‘ Goldsmith had three brothers ;
 ‘ Charles, who went to America in early
 ‘ life ; Maurice, who was a cabinet-
 ‘ maker, and lived and died in Dublin,
 ‘ about six or seven years ago ; and the
 ‘ above-named Henry.

‘ He had two sisters, Catherine and

‘ Jane, whom I knew intimately: they
 ‘ lived and died in Athlone, about ten
 ‘ years since.

‘ Of his relations, there remain
 ‘ Henry, his nephew, who lives in
 ‘ Rhode-Island in America, son of
 ‘ his brother Henry; Catherine, his
 ‘ niece, sister of Henry, who lives in
 ‘ Dublin and teaches music; and
 ‘ Oliver Goldsmith Hodson, his grand-
 ‘ nephew, who inherits and lives on an
 ‘ estate of about 700*l.* a year, eight
 ‘ miles from this town.

‘ Several of the family and name live
 ‘ near Elphin, who, as well as the poet,

‘ were and are remarkable for their
‘ worth; but of no cleverness in the
‘ common affairs of the world. From
‘ these, indeed, he differed in brightness
‘ of genius in the latter part of his life;
‘ yet he was considered by his contem-
‘ poraries and school-fellows, with whom
‘ I have often conversed on the subject,
‘ as a stupid, heavy blockhead, little
‘ better than a fool, whom every one
‘ made fun of. But his corporal pow-
‘ ers differed widely from this apparent
‘ state of his mind, for he was remarka-
‘ bly active and athletic; of which he
‘ gave proofs in all exercises among his

‘ playmates, and eminently in ball-
 ‘ playing, which he was very fond of,
 ‘ and practised whenever he could.

‘ He was intended for the church,
 ‘ and went to the bishop of Elphin to
 ‘ be examined for orders; but appear-
 ‘ ing *in a pair of scarlet breeches* (a
 ‘ piece of dress, you will allow, not ex-
 ‘ actly suited to a clerical garb), he was
 ‘ rejected, turned his studies to physic,
 ‘ and went to the university of Edin-
 ‘ burgh. * * * *

‘ Believe me, my dear Sir,

‘ Sincerely yours,

‘ Glebe, Athlone.

‘ ANNESLEY STREAN.’

Dec. 31, 1807.’

The place of Goldsmith's birth is, we may now conclude, established beyond the reach of disputation; and it appears that Dr. Johnson was not accurately informed when he wrote his friend's epitaph, as it stands in Westminster-abbey; in which it is said that Goldsmith was born IN LOCO CUI NOMEN PALLAS: an error that has given rise to a strange conceit on the part of the absurd translator of the Latin, who observes that the place in question was one *where Pallas had set her name!*

To many, this investigation will appear impertinent and immaterial: there

are some, however, who will think otherwise of it, and allow that it is desirable to know even the most trivial circumstance connected with the life of one whose writings are destined to delight and improve mankind hereafter, and whose private history will probably form an object of eager inquiry to generations yet unborn.

Upon the subject of novels I have, as I conceive, said all that belongs to the nature of this Essay, designedly thrown

off in a plain, brief, and popular manner, in order to afford it the better chance of being read and remembered by those for whose use it is intended.

But as it might be thought that I had very imperfectly performed my task should I, in treating of light reading, pass by the poetical department without notice, I shall add something upon that head. And, in the first instance, offer my opinion candidly on the general characteristics of the poems of Swift and Pope: I mean those parts of their poetical labours which are more particularly in every one's possession,

and constantly submitted to the eye of youth, as models of perfect versification, and splendid proofs of human capacity.

It must be confessed that many of their poems are such: but it should not be forgotten that the most ingenious compositions of these eminent wits are also the most pernicious and inexcusable.

These authors, in their poetical characters, may be considered as parallels to Fielding and Smollet, and as entitled, for many of their effusions, to the like condemnation. Let any person of ripe

years and an unprejudiced mind reflect on the tendency of some of Pope's poems, and say what it is which they must be supposed to teach those who for the first time peruse their contents.

Is it credible that any one was ever made wiser or better by the corrupt and profane allusions contained in the "Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard;" by the vile precepts inculcated in the "*Elegy on an unfortunate young Lady*;" or by the false philosophy, the trite sentiments, and solemn *nothings* of the "*Essay on Man*?" The far-famed "*Rape of the Lock*" is by no means

free from taint; and much might be said to prove that many of his shorter pieces are exceedingly reprehensible.

Of some of the inspirations of Dean Swift's Muse it is not possible to speak in terms too severe; nor, indeed, to speak at all, without danger of impropriety: I shall, therefore, only observe that in one place or another of his poetical writings, and those of Pope, may be discovered instances the most flagitious of almost every indecorous and debasing thought that the heart of humanity can conceive.

This assertion, I am sorry to think,

cannot be contradicted; but the inference it carries along with it is obvious, and needs no explanation: the poetical volumes of Swift and Pope should not be placed, as they perpetually are, in youthful and innocent hands!

Criminal as they are for having thus written, these renowned names are responsible for still greater offences; as they have been the means of encouraging innumerable copyists; who, incapable of melodious verse or poignant wit, could yet, like them, be abusive, filthy, and obscene; and have accordingly, for more than half a century, in-

fested society with what they imagine, or pretend to imagine, imitations of Swift and Pope, but which are really satires on the patriotic Dean and the bard of Twickenham.

It is neither in my power nor suitable to my purpose to warn others against every poetaster or whining sonneteer of the present, or of a more remote period ; nor does it come within my plan to enlarge on the merits of many poets of our own time, who have *honourably* acquired fame by their compositions. But I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of noticing some of them ;

deservedly esteemed the supporters of virtue, and the ornaments of English literature.

Amongst the most celebrated of these may be mentioned Goldsmith, Cowper, and the too much neglected Langhorne, the author of "*Owen of Carron*;" a poem which perhaps bids as fair for immortality as any light production of ancient or modern genius. This delightful work, and the *Task* of Cowper, and the *Traveller* and *Deserted Village* of Goldsmith, do not, I admit, rank more properly under the denomination of LIGHT READING than hundreds which

are stationed in private libraries, and which are read with avidity, and quoted with applause. But they possess certain attractive qualities, not easily described, though powerfully felt. They overflow with charms for every laudable variety of taste, and for each degree of understanding. To their matter, and the harmonious numbers in which it is conveyed, there exists something responsive in every bosom : no preparative erudition is required to make them intelligible, nor any comment wanting to indicate their beauties ; and, to the reader of these pages, if not very fastidious, I

should hope that an apology is unnecessary for introducing a few of the distinguished passages in each of these poems: and first, of the *Traveller* and *Deserted Village*.

Of these, Mr. Cumberland, in his Memoirs of himself, has an observation which appears to me, and will, I believe, be thought by most other readers, exceedingly unjust. He says of Goldsmith, that the paucity of his verses does not allow us to rank him in that high poetical station to which his genius might have carried him; and adds, of the *Deserted Village*, *Traveller*, and

Hermit, that they are only specimens—
 “*Birds’ eggs on a string, and eggs of
 small birds too.*”

Mr. Cumberland’s objection to the claims of Goldsmith, from the circumstance of his not having written more in verse than he did, is altogether so destitute of force, as to render a laboured refutation superfluous. He must know, as well as any one, that excellence in an author consists not in writing much but in writing well. When we read the ode addressed by Horace to Aristius (22d ode, 1st book), the Pollio of Virgil, or the *Lycidas* of Milton, we are satis-

fied that the minds, from which these inestimable productions emanated, were truly poetical, and of the highest class: and surely the dramatic reputation of the amiable and ingenious author of the *West Indian* would not have suffered any diminution had he composed nothing more for the stage than that admired comedy.

The meaning of Mr. Cumberland's *birds' eggs*, &c. is not very distinct, though the expression is very puerile; neither the epicure, nor the amateur of delicate plumage or of the music of the fields and groves, would agree with

Mr. Cumberland in preferring the *eggs* of the crocodile, the ostrich, or the goose, for their produce, to those of the pheasant, the goldfinch, or the lark!

If the Traveller and Deserted Village are examined, they will be found, in most respects, to bear the closest scrutiny of criticism, to abound with precepts of the soundest policy, the shrewdest remarks on human character, descriptions of local scenery as rich and as appropriate as any thing that ever came from the pen of Shakspeare or the pencil of Claude; and, for plaintive melody of versification, and pathetic appeals to

the heart, they stand perhaps unrivalled.

The exordium of the "*Traveller*, or *a Prospect of Society*," is very happily conceived; and the reference to home and its delights, is an affecting instance of the poet's art in the commencement of a composition which depicts the wanderings over a foreign land of one, whose "*heart untravelled*" turns with fondness to the scenes of early life, and acknowledges so tenderly the ties of kindred. Though nothing can appear more easy or natural than this introduction of himself, yet thus completely

to interest the reader in his private feelings is a proof of consummate skill.

The altitude which he makes choice of to take his purposed view of society, is selected with great judgment :

“ Ev’n now, where Alpine solitudes ascend,

I sit me down, a pensive hour to spend.”

Beneath him he sees, while “ *above the storm’s career,*” lakes, forests, cities, plains, the kingly palace, and the shepherd’s cottage ; and remembering that “ man,” however destitute, should not cease to be benevolent, he exults in the visible prosperity of his fellow-beings, and exclaims, in the sublimest

spirit of philanthropy and poetical fervour,

“ Creation’s heir, the world, the world is mine.”

Some of the landscapes which follow are executed with inimitable truth, and with surprising variety of expression; and his pictures of Italy and the United Provinces are drawn with great ability :

“ Far to the right, where Appenine ascends,
Bright as the summer Italy extends;
The uplands sloping deck the mountain’s side,
Woods over woods, in gay, theatric pride;
While oft some temple’s mould’ring tops between,
With venerable grandeur mark the scene.”

How few, but how masterly, the strokes used to produce this accurate and luxurious description!

Having sketched the "*churlish soil*" of Switzerland, and the sprightly region of France, with their inhabitants, he proceeds—

"To men of other minds my fancy flies,
 Embosom'd in the deep where Holland lies:

* * * * *

Where the pent ocean, rising o'er the pile,
 Sees an amphibious world beneath him smile;
 The slow canal, the yellow-blossom'd vale,
 The willow-tufted bank, the gliding sail,
 The crowded mart, the cultivated plain;
 A new creation rescued from his reign."

His transition to England, "*the land of scholars, and the nurse of arms,*" is unquestionably one of the most majestic flights of poetry. The political observations, which adorn his view of Britain,

are eminently just and spirited; and the versification of this concluding part of the poem is full of energy and grace.

Over this fine work there is spread an imposing air of philosophic dignity, which awes the reader; and, engaging his understanding rather than his sensibility, forces him to reflection.

The Deserted Village, written in the same measure, and with every mark of the same potent hand, has a distinct character; it applies more immediately to the softer feelings of our nature, than to our reasoning faculties; and evinces the fertility of Goldsmith's genius, by

showing him equally capable of exciting emotions of tenderness and compassion. Here almost all the imagery is familiar to our eyes, and all the sentiments to our hearts. We seem rather to remember what the poet describes, than to receive information from his lines ; we acknowledge without hesitation the fidelity of his outline ; we instantaneously grow acquainted with every interesting object ; each “ rural sight and sound ;” the hamlet, its humble children, and their saintly pastor ; their joys and their sorrows. We share their sufferings, and shed tears over the downfall of their

happiness, when, at the poet's bidding, this lovely pageant vanishes; and for the mansion of festivity, and the fields which industry had taught to smile, we behold only a ruin and a desert.

Whether or not this, and other poems of Goldsmith, would bear the test of a critical inquisition, is a question that does not belong to my present purpose; which is to exhibit him in a far higher capacity than that of a versifier: as A MORAL INSTRUCTOR, WHOSE TALENTS WERE UNIFORMLY DIRECTED TO THE GREAT AND PRAISE-WORTHY END OF COMMUNICATING TO

HIS COUNTRYMEN A PARTIALITY FOR THE DICTATES OF VIRTUE. And this he has done so effectually, that, in reading his lines, we are more apt to weigh the thoughts they contain, than the powers that produced them; and, overlooking the graces and sweetness by which his verse is distinguished, to dwell with intense admiration on the substance.

In support of this remark, I shall extract only a few passages from the Deserted Village; the construction of which, however beautiful, is scarcely ever adverted to by the multitudes who

are enraptured with the images which they present to the mind.

Nothing of its kind can be more finished than the picture of the village-clergyman: but the simile employed to illustrate the poet's account of his strict performance of the pastoral office, the affection he feels for his people, and the persevering piety by which he wins them to paths of holiness and peace, if not matchless, has never been excelled:

“ And as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledg'd offspring to the skies,
He try'd each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
Allur'd to brighter worlds, and led the way.”

If this idea can be equalled by another, in any language, ancient or modern, it is by that with which the portrait concludes :

“ To them his heart, his love, his griefs were giv’n ;
 But all his serious thoughts had rest in heav’n.
 As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
 Swells from the vale, and mid-way leaves the storm,
 Tho’ round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
 Eternal sunshine settles on its head.”

His heart and his taste must be alike vitiated, who unmoved could contemplate the subject of the following lines, or be insensible to the melody with which they flow :

“ Ah ! turn thine eyes,
 Where the poor, houseless, shiv’ring female lies :

She once, perhaps, in village-plenty blest,
 Has wept at tales of innocence distress ;
 Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
 Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn.
 Now lost to all ; her friends, her virtue fled,
 Near her betrayer's door she lays her head ;
 And, pinch'd with cold, and shrinking from the show'r,
 With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
 When idly, first, ambitious of the town,
 She left her wheel, and robes of country-brown."

The *Deserted Village* ends with an address to Poetry, not only affecting for the solemnity of its *personal* allusion, and pleasing to the reader for the smooth current of its versification, but remarkable as displaying the virtuous enthusiasm of Goldsmith, and a gene-

rous declaration of what was *his* notion concerning a poet's duty, and the influence of his art on mankind :

“ And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
 Still first to fly where sensual joys invade ;
 Unfit, in these degen'rate times of shame,
 To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame :
 Dear, charming nymph ! neglected and decry'd,
 My shame in crowds, my solitary pride ;
 Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe,
 That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so ;
 Thou guide, by which the nobler arts excel,
 Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well !

Cowper has pursued a different course from that of Goldsmith, but has successfully attained the same great and

desirable end; that of persuading men to a love of virtue, and delighting those whom he professes to instruct.

The excellencies of his *Task*, which is written in blank verse, are so various, as to leave the reader in doubt whether most to admire it as an evidence of the author's poetical talents, his goodness of heart, his sublimity of conception and expression, the integrity of his judgment, or the felicity of his wit.

The morality and good sense of Cowper are, throughout all his writings, but particularly in the serious parts of

the *Task*, as conspicuous as those of Young, without being overshadowed by the gloom of sadness which generally characterises the author of the *Night Thoughts*: while Cowper's more lively and familiar passages are illuminated by rays of cheerfulness and flashes of pleasantry that would elicit a smile from Melancholy herself.

To the admirers of the *Task*, some short extracts from it will not prove unacceptable; and still less so to such as are ignorant of a poem which is justly esteemed one of the boasts of British literature, and with which it is indeed

difficult to suppose any English reader not acquainted.

Cowper's love of a country-life, and all its enchantments, is constantly discernible; nor is he ever happier than in the introduction of the most ordinary objects of a rural nature; which, on every suitable occasion, he applies to his purpose with great dexterity. Thus, early in the *Task*, when decrying the pursuit of frivolous and vicious pleasures, he brings forward an image employed by almost every other poet, which yet comes from his pen embellished with new graces:

“ The lark is gay,
 That dries his feathers, saturate with dew,
 Beneath the rosy cloud, while yet the beams
 Of day-spring overshoot his humble nest.”

The preference given by man to rural scenes, he seems to think general; he terms it,

“ An in-born universal thirst.”

And then, with great truth and force of humour, says—

“ The most unfurnish'd with the means of life,
 And they that never pass their brick-wall bounds
 To range the fields, and treat their lungs with air,
 Yet feel the burning instinct; over head
 Suspend their crazy boxes, planted thick,
 And water'd duly. There the pitcher stands,
 A fragment; and the spoutless tea-pot there;
 Sad witnesses how close-pent man regrets

The country ; with what ardour he contrives
A peep at Nature, when he can no more."

The personification of winter, in the fourth book, has probably never been exceeded by writer or painter ; and while it combines circumstances which no pencil could describe, contains enough to furnish the artist with an august subject, and confirms the author a genuine poet :

" O Winter, ruler of th' inverted year,
Thy scatter'd hair with sleet like ashes fill'd ;
Thy breath congeal'd upon thy lips ; thy cheeks
Fring'd with a beard, made white with other snows
Than those of age ; thy forehead wrapt in clouds ;
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne

A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,
But urg'd by storms along its slipp'ry way."

That of evening, in the same book, is also very finely imagined :

" Return, sweet Evening, and continue long!
Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,
With matron-step slow moving ; while the Night
Treads on thy sweeping train : one hand employ'd
In letting fall the curtain of repose
On bird and beast ; the other charg'd for man
With sweet oblivion of the cares of day :
Not sumptuously adorn'd, nor needing aid,
Like homely-featur'd Night, of clust'ring gems :
A star or two just twinkling on thy brow.
Suffices thee."

The fifth book opens with a description of a frosty morning, which is ex-

tremely beautiful, and accompanied by a thought full of that playfulness of fancy and chastened humour for which Cowper is remarkable:

“ ’Tis morning, and the sun, with ruddy orb
 Ascending, fires th’ horizon: while the clouds,
 That crowd away before the driving wind,
 More ardent as the disk emerges more,
 Resemble most some city in a blaze,
 Seen through the leafless wood. His slanting ray
 Slides ineffectual down the snowy vale,
 And tinging all with his own rosy hue,
 From ev’ry herb and ev’ry spiry blade,
 Stretches a length of shadow o’er the field.
 Mine, spindling into longitude immense,
 In spite of gravity and sage remark
 That I myself am but a fleeting shade,
 Provokes me to a smile. With eye askance

I view the muscular proportion'd limb
 Transform'd to a lean shank. The shapeless pair,
 As they design'd to mock me, at my side
 Take step for step ; and, as I near approach
 The cottage, walk along the plaster'd wall,
 Prepost'rous sight ! the legs without the man."

'The woodman and his faithful attendant have supplied the subject of a much-admired painting, and the dog is well represented on the canvas,

" Shaggy, and lean, and shrewd ; with pointed ears,
 And tail cropp'd short ; half lurcher and half cur."

But here the painter's art must desist,
 and is left far behind by that of the poet :—

" Now creeps he slow ; and now, with many a frisk,
 Wide-scamp'ring, snatches up the drifted snow .

With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout,
Then shakes his powder'd coat, and barks for joy."

This is exquisitely told: had it been Homer's or Virgil's, how often would it have been quoted, and what applause would have been lavished on every epithet, or even on every word of the passage! Many other parts of the fifth book are uncommonly happy; particularly the account of the palace of ice, built by the empress of Russia. The genius of Cowper revels amidst the frozen scenery, and shows that his was very justly entitled "the winter-loving muse."

But on other topics he is not less suc-

cessful; and his powers are augmented to a degree of magnificence proportioned to their object; for instance, speaking of Deity, he says, with grandeur befitting the awful theme—

“ The unambiguous footsteps of the God,
 Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
 And wheels his throne upon the rolling worlds.”

This great poet's love of freedom also inspires his verse with more than wonted energy; and, in the second book of the Task, he pleads, with most pathetic eloquence, the cause of a long-oppressed and degraded race of mankind; nor is it possible to repress the

sigh of regret, when we recollect that his liberal and feeling heart had ceased to beat before the accomplishment of his generous wish in favour of the hapless negro!

For the verses alluded to, I shall refer my reader to the original, and here transcribe from them only three lines, which are remarkable, because they contain a thought similar to one that was afterwards made use of by the finest orator of the age, and which his mighty talents expanded into a passage perhaps more sublime than any on record from the days of Demosthenes to the

present hour. Cowper says, very beautifully,

“ Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free;
They touch our country, and their shackles fall.”

The celebrated Mr. Curran, in the course of one of his splendid orations, thus expressed himself:

—— ‘ I speak in the spirit of the
‘ British law, which makes liberty com-
‘ mensurate with, and inseparable from
‘ British soil; which proclaims to the
‘ stranger and the sojourner, the mo-
‘ ment he sets his foot on British
‘ ground, that the earth he treads is

‘ holy, and consecrated by the genius of
‘ universal emancipation. No matter
‘ in what language his doom may have
‘ been pronounced; no matter in what
‘ disastrous battle his liberties may have
‘ been cloven down; no matter what
‘ complexion, incompatible with free-
‘ dom, an Indian or an African sun
‘ may have burnt upon him; no matter
‘ with what ceremonies he may have
‘ been devoted upon the altar of
‘ Slavery: the instant that he touches
‘ the sacred shore of Britain, the altar
‘ and the god sink together in the dust;
‘ his soul walks abroad in her own ma-

‘ jesty ; his body swells beyond the mea-
 ‘ sure of his chains, that burst from
 ‘ around him ; and he stands redeemed,
 ‘ regenerated, and disenthralled, by the
 ‘ irresistible genius of universal emanci-
 ‘ pation !’

The resources of this great orator's own mind are known to be nearly inexhaustible ; it is therefore not probable that he borrowed any part of the above from the poet : but it is pleasing to observe a coincidence of idea in two men of superior intellect, when awakened by the same animating subject.

In speaking of those who, by the mo-

ral tendency of their poems, the accumulation of interesting circumstances, and the sweetness of their versification, have largely contributed to the delight and improvement of their country, and increased the stores of light reading in England, without any intermixture of licentiousness, it would be unjust to omit the names of Gray, Collins, Beattie, and Langhorne. Of these, however, I shall here take particular notice of the last-named only ; and of him, merely for the purpose of endeavouring to revive the public attention to his poem of "Owen of Carron."

As the story is more than legendary, though founded on an incident not totally unexceptionable, the poet cannot fairly be arraigned on that account. He has, besides, related it with infinite delicacy, enriched it with a great variety of miniature beauties, and rendered it, for harmony of composition and for pathos, one of the most interesting pieces of popular poetry extant.

The story of "Owen of Carron" is like that of the ancient ballad known by the title of *Gill Morris*, printed in the curious collection of the learned and venerable bishop of Dromore. It also

resembles the plot of the tragedy of *Douglas*, which has been a favourite with the public for above fifty years, and the fable of which, not the least of its charms, has been considered by the best judges as the most complete ever chosen by a dramatic poet, and most calculated to produce one of the chief ends of tragedy, that of affecting the mind through the mediums of *terror* and *pity*.

It may not be safe to affirm that any useful lesson is directly taught by Langhorne in this poem. Like Home, he has represented the lot of virtue as ulti-

mately unfortunate; and the good are drawn as the principal victims of error and fatality, not of crime. For this, supposing it to stand in need of excuse, a sufficient reason arises from the necessity of adhering to received tradition.

In the descriptive parts, and the general machinery of the poem, the author has relied on the stores of his own genius; and with great art has magnified the simple action of the ballad into a long and very fascinating composition.

In the construction of his verse he

has preserved just as much of the ballad metre as was requisite to give it what may be termed a rustic air, without the least approach to vulgarity, or to that ruggedness of pauses and accentuation by which the old English ballad is often distinguished.

The story opens with an idea of strict poetical authority, that the primroses growing on Carron's side, where Owen lies interred, are tinged with a purple hue in memory of his fall; and with an allusion to a dirge sung at the annual return of spring, in honour of the youth, by the nymphs of Marlivale. The date

of the events recorded is assigned to the days of William the Lion, king of Scotland, when the earl of Moray is stated to have been a powerful chieftain :

“ In fortune rich, in offspring poor,
An only daughter crown’d his bed :”

fair Ellen, the heroine, being his only child. This circumstance, and the lady’s worth, are touched on in a stanza of considerable force :

“ Oh! write not poor ;—the wealth that flows
In waves of gold round India’s throne,
All in her shining breast that glows,
To Ellen’s charms were earth and stone.”

She is addressed by many suitors of high rank without effect, and is destined, according to the prediction of a "*wayward sister*," to yield her heart to Nithisdale; whom she has not seen, but is doomed to behold in a vision, while sleeping near the banks of the river in a bower constructed with the rapidity of lightning by the "sprite of dreams," and beautifully decorated by magic hands.

This is all conceived and expressed with a poet's fire, and many of the stanzas flow with peculiar ease: these for instance;

" In vain by foreign arts assail'd,

No foreign loves her breast beguile ;

And England's honest valour fail'd,

Paid with a cold but courteous smile.

" ' Ah ! woe to thee, young Nithisdale,

That o'er thy cheeks those roses stray'd ;

Thy breath, the violet of the vale,

Thy voice, the music of the shade :

" ' Ah ! woe to thee, that Ellen's love

Alone to thy soft tale would yield ;

For soon those gentle arms shall prove

The conflict of a ruder field !'

" 'Twas thus a wayward sister spoke,

And cast a rueful glance behind,

As from her dim-wood glen she broke,

And mounted on the moaning wind."

The lines descriptive of Ellen's re-

tiring to slumber, and of the accompanying scenery, have always appeared to me of almost unparalleled beauty, and as conveying to the fancy a painting worthy of the best Italian master :

“ ’Twas when, on summer’s softest eve,
Of clouds that wander’d west away,
Twilight with gentle hand did weave
Her fairy robe of night and day :

“ When all the mountain-gales were still,
And the wave slept against the shore ;
And the sun, sunk beneath the hill,
Left his last smile on Lemmormore.”

The allusion to the power presiding over dreams, and its wonder-working influence, is very striking :

“ There is some kind and courtly sprite
 That o’er the realm of Fancy reigns,
 Throws sunshine on the mask of night,
 And smiles at slumber’s powerless chains.

“ ’Tis told, and I believe the tale,
 At this soft hour the sprite was there,
 And spread with fairer flow’rs the vale,
 And fill’d with sweeter sounds the air.”

The miraculous bower is most fancifully embellished :

“ Yet it was wrought in simple show ;
 Nor Indian mine nor orient shores
 Had lent their glories here to glow,
 Or yielded here their shining stores.

“ All round a poplar’s trembling arms
 The wild-rose wound its damask flow’r ;
 The woodbine lent its spicy charms,
 That loves to weave the lover’s bow’r.

“ The ash, that courts the mountain-air,
 In all its painted blooms array’d;
 The wilding’s blossom, blushing fair,
 Combin’d to form the flow’ry shade.

“ With thyme, that loves the brown hill’s breast;
 The cowslip’s sweet reclining head;
 The violet, of sky-woven vest,
 Was all the fairy ground bespread.”

At a time and in a place thus auspicious to love, the vision of Nithisdale, with “ *hunter’s spear and warrior’s bow*,” is presented to the fancy of the sleeping Ellen;—when the poet interrupts his narrative by an appeal to the experience of his reader; of whom he asks, whether he, too, has not been led by the

sprite of dreams over embroidered lawns
and flowery valleys; and adds,

“ Hast thou not some fair object seen,
And, when the fleeting form was past,
Still on thy mem’ry found its mien,
And felt the fond idea last?”

This is preparatory to the subsequent interview between Nithisdale and Ellen, whose heart is thus prepossessed in favour of him who is the ruler of her destiny. She finds him sleeping; he awakes while she gazes on him, and, subdued by the eloquence with which passion inspires her youthful lover, she is irretrievably captivated. The meet-

ing being observed by the jealous Earl Barnard, who has fixed his affections rather on the wealth than the charms of Moray's heiress, it leads to the assassination of the lover ; who, pierced with arrows, sleeps for ever beneath the poplar against which he leaned to meditate on his mistress ; who has parted from him ; but returning with joyful impatience, and seeing Nithisdale, supposes him asleep, approaches with gentle step, and, discovering the truth, faints upon the ground beside him—

“ Her pillow swells not deep with down,

For her no balms their sweets exhale ;

Her limbs are on the pale turf thrown,
 Press'd by her lovely cheek as pale.

“ On that fair cheek, that flowing hair,
 The broom its yellow leaf hath shed ;
 And the chill mountain's early air
 Blows wildly o'er that beauteous head.”

After long endurance of sufferings and sorrow, and having given birth to Owen in the solitude of a shepherd's hut, where her son is brought up, and his mother's jewels, “ *all unmeet for her,*” delivered with him to the peasant who is his protector, Ellen reaches her father's castle ; and finally, by his command, marries the lord of Lothian, igno-

rant that he was the murderer of Nithisdale.

Owen grows up, arriving at that period when

“ Reason has lent her quiv’ring light,
And shown the chequer’d field of man ;”

and when he is described reflecting in loneliness on the mystery that involves him ; and, wandering through the woods of Carron, is said to resemble Adam while alone in Paradise :

“ As the first human heir of earth
With pensive eye himself survey’d,
And all unconscious of his birth,
Sate thoughtful oft in Eden’s shade ;

“ In pensive thought so Owen stray’d——

From the wife of the peasant who has reared him he hears, in her dying moments, the history of his birth; having anxiously inquired of her the story of his mother's picture, which he has long contemplated with excessive emotion. The mournful eyes of the portrait, he says, have wounded his heart, and drawn down the unbidden tear. This is the *mentis gratissimus error*, a trait formed on the mistaken notion of what is termed the force of blood. But it is one of those errors which, in defiance of reason, the wisest are almost unwilling to resign, and by the use of which the

author of *Douglas* has greatly increased the pathos of one of his finest scenes. At the first sight of Norval the breast of Lady Randolph throbs with unaccountable violence; and on discovering him to be her son, she exclaims to her companion, “ *No wonder, Anna, that my bosom burn’d !*”

The hapless Owen having obtained the wished-for information, is, as may naturally be supposed, exceedingly agitated by the disclosure. The reflection the poet makes in this place is very just and very affecting:

“ The heart that, sorrow doom’d to share,
 Has worn the frequent seal of woe,
 Its sad impression learns to bear,
 And finds full oft its ruin slow :

“ But when the seal is first imprest,
 When the young heart its pain shall try,
 From the soft yielding, trembling breast
 Oft seems the startled soul to fly ! ”

On the death of his protectress,
 Owen hastens to Lothian’s vale, and
 sends a written message, and with it
 “ the well-informing bracelet,” to his pa-
 rent ; but these fall into the hands of
 the fierce earl, by whom the youth is
 detected and slain as a rival ; and the
 tragedy is completed by the death of

the wretched lady, to whom the shock proves instantaneously mortal.

It is more than singular that so ingenious a composition as the above should have ever ceased to be popular ; nor does it redound much to the credit of their taste who profess themselves admirers of *Light Reading*, that they should be forward to applaud and encourage the frantic and discordant ravings of the *Della-Crusca* school the effusions of Rosa Matildas, and Anna Matildas, &c. &c., while Owen of Carron is unread, and perhaps altogether forgotten.

Should the foregoing slight examination of this specimen of Doctor Langhorne's poetry persuade others, who may not as yet have seen them, to read the volumes published by his son, I shall be found in my recommendation to have consulted their indulgence at least as much as the reputation of the author.

And now to conclude this inquiry: I am conscious that in the course of it I have not advanced any thing which I do not think, nor any thing of which,

morally speaking, I should be ashamed: I am also thoroughly satisfied that my motive for this attempt, as far as the subject of *novels* is concerned, is closely connected with public advantage, and, as such, praiseworthy; while, on the other hand, I feel that to these superficial hints a great deal might be added, and that what I have here endeavoured to say might have been much better said by many others. Yet I cannot but wish—and my wishes almost amount to hopes—that parts of this humble essay may be the means of awakening some serious reflections in the minds of those

who by nature or accident are the guardians of the young; and that hereby they may be induced to consider the importance of their high and holy office; the inestimable value of their hours to rational beings in early life; the good or evil consequences arising to society from the proper employment or the waste of that precious portion of existence; and, finally, the truth of a maxim I have tried to enforce, that *light reading*, of a certain kind, is, like procrastination, too frequently, at least

“The thief of time;”

and, as the expression is usually understood, essentially injurious to the growth of private and public virtue.

FINIS.

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